

September 13, 2021

Board of Zoning Adjustments
Government of the District of Columbia

Re: Case Number #20500 Zoning Exceptions for the Mullett Rowhouses

Dear BZA:

We are writing regarding Case #20500 that asks for a special exception to allow expansion of the properties at 2521 and 2525 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW.

We own Unit 318 in the Westbridge Condominium, located at 2555 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. Our unit, located one floor above ground level, looks onto the alley space in question behind the Mullett rowhouses as well as the backs of the 1112 25th Street NW and 2501 Pennsylvania Avenue condominiums. We would like to express our views before the Board, and are doing so via this letter.

We see the garbage, moving, and repair vehicles maneuvering their way daily in this area. We see the vehicles from the 1112 condominium parked in the spaces adjoining the alley and across from where the new carriage house would be. (The parking space area is referred to as the "back yard" in Exhibit 37A.) We watch as storm water is directed down the slopes from these alleys to Pennsylvania Avenue and away from the buildings.

We oppose the Board granting special exception for the addition of the carriage house as part of the Mullett rowhouse renovation. We have a number of concerns about this project, some of which were answered in a neighborhood meeting with the developer on May 11, but others which were, to our mind, not sufficiently answered and should be cause for rejection.

Of primary concern to us is how the proposed new carriage house, garage, and patio will sit on the property, considering the slope of the area around it and the implications for water runoff. There is currently an incline from Pennsylvania Avenue in the alley along the west side of the Mullett rowhouses; another incline in the smaller alley paralleling the back of the Mullett rowhouses; and then two different inclines from the smaller alley up to each of the two Mullett rowhouses themselves. In addition, the alleys are contoured for water runoff, with the middle of the alleys lower than the sides, allowing the water to run to Pennsylvania Avenue and away from foundations of the surrounding buildings. Refer to the photographs in Exhibit 5 on pages 19 through 24 that show this configuration and the contours.

From the neighborhood meeting in May we understood that some "leveling" of the alley space would be needed to build the carriage house but would not necessitate changes to the alleys

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.20500
EXHIBIT NO.44

themselves, except possibly to a small piece at the intersection of the two alleys, a piece that is Mullett property. The rendering in now-superseded Exhibit 6 diagram A05 showed a carriage house with windows on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors matching the level of the Mullett rowhouse windows – with at the same time a ground level matching the level of the alley. That to our mind would be impossible without lowering the alleys. The renderings in the recently released Exhibit 37B1 now show the carriage house windows no longer on a level with the Mullett windows, making the ground level possibly more viable in the back and on the west. But it also shows a carriage house taller than originally depicted (compare Exhibit 6 diagram A05 to Exhibit 37B1 diagram A05). This results in a carriage house now as tall as the top of the proposed fifth floor modification to the Mullett building and taller than the chimneys that were deemed important for historic preservation. This change appears to make the carriage house at least a half story taller than what was discussed in the neighborhood meeting in May.

But of even more critical concern, current Exhibit 37B1 diagrams A05 and A05B show a perfectly horizontal plane for the carriage house at ground level in the back and on the west side (the areas containing ground floor door and garage openings and abutting the alleys). These diagrams do not account for the slope of the alleys they directly abut and instead show entrances resting on a horizontal line. Is the intent now for the developer to flatten the alleys to accommodate these openings? If the alley slope and building setting are not depicted as they are intended to be, new diagrams and new reviews are needed. Again, changing the alleys in any way risks changing the flow of water runoff between the existing buildings. Changing the alleys for the benefit of the proposed carriage house and to the potential detriment of the surrounding buildings is totally unacceptable to us.

Given that the diagrams continue to show horizontal building planes abutting sloped alleys and given that the carriage house is now depicted at least a half story taller than originally described, the question is how will the carriage house properly fit into its proposed setting. To our minds, the effects of the addition of the carriage house on the slope of the alley space and the surrounding buildings have not been properly shown for you, the Board. For this reason and others, we oppose the request for modifications to build it.

Sincerely,



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